The ENVIRONMENTAL BULLETIN
from the Savannah River Site
December 29, 1997 • Volume 8 • Number 28

Draft EIS released, The Accelerator Production of Tritium

The Savannah River Operations Office of the U.S. Department of Energy has announced the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Accelerator Production of Tritium.

This document evaluates and presents the potential environmental impacts of alternatives for construction and operation of a facility to produce tritium using accelerator technology. Two public meetings to discuss the draft EIS and receive public comments will be held on January 13, 1998: 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., at the North Augusta Community Center, North Augusta, South Carolina. The 45-day public comment period will end February 2, 1998.

Tritium is an essential ingredient in U.S. nuclear weapons. Because tritium decays at the rate of 5 percent per year, it must be replenished periodically for weapons to operate as designed. The U.S. has not produced tritium since 1988 when the last tritium production reactor was shut down at the Department's Savannah River Site (SRS). Tritium requirements have been met since then through the use of recycled gas from retired weapons.

The programmatic alternatives for a new tritium source were evaluated in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Tritium Supply and Recycling (DOE/EIS-0161, October 1995). The Record of Decision (60 FR 63877, December 12, 1995) for that PEIS stated that the Department would pursue a "dual track" of the two most promising tritium supply alternatives.

One track would use existing commercial reactors to produce the tritium; the draft EIS analyzing this option will be released in 1998. The other track, analyzed in this draft EIS, would produce tritium using a new linear accelerator. The Department has already decided that if such an accelerator were to be built, it would be built at the Savannah River Site.

This draft EIS analyzes alternatives, as required under the National Environmental Policy Act, for the specific location at the Savannah River Site where the accelerator would be built, and the kinds of technology to be employed (for example, whether the accelerator would be supercooled or operate at room temperature). In the reactor approach, a procurement process is being used to determine which reactors would be reasonable alternatives for producing tritium; only those reactors will be analyzed in detail, in a separate EIS. A decision is expected by late 1998 to designate one of the "dual tracks" as the primary tritium production technology, with the other as the backup.

Written comments may be submitted to Andrew R. Grainger, SR NEPA Compliance Officer, U.S. Department of Energy, Savannah River Operations Office, P.O. Box A, Code APT, Building 773-42A, Room 212, Aiken, South Carolina 29802; or by electronic mail to nepa@srs.gov.

Oral comments may be recorded by calling (800) 881-7292, or presented at the public meetings. These comments will be considered during the preparation of the final EIS. The draft EIS is also available on the Internet at

http://www.srs.gov/general/scitech/apt/index.htm

MAILING LIST

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

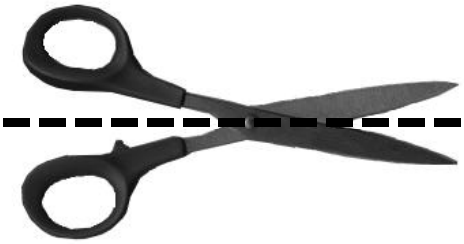
____Add to mail list

____Remove from mail list

____Correct my address

Mail to:

SRS Environmental Bulletin
Savannah River Site
Building 705-A
Aiken, S.C. 29808



The SRS Environmental Bulletin

For more information on this or other cleanup and compliance activities at SRS, please contact:

Mary Flora
WSRC
Building 703-A
Aiken, S.C. 29808
(803) 725-2272

Donna Moore
WSRC
Public Relations
(803) 725-0189

The SRS Environmental Bulletin
Savannah River Site
Building 705-A
Aiken, S.C. 29808